

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method comprising:
in a portable data device, checking a wireless network card for a stored platform discrimination indication; and
depending on the value of the platform discrimination indication, inhibiting or allowing data transfer using the wireless network card.
2. The method of Claim 1 wherein the portable data device is a notebook computer.
3. The method of Claim 1 wherein if the data transfer is inhibited, the portable data device requests an upgrade key value.
4. The method of Claim 3 wherein if an upgrade key value is provided by a user, the portable data device calculates a unique calculated I.D. value.
5. The method of Claim 4 wherein the calculated I.D. value is compared to a unique electronic I.D. value stored in the wireless network card.
6. The method of Claim 5 wherein if the calculated I.D. value matches the electronic I.D. value of the wireless network card, transmissions from the portable computer to the wireless network card are enabled.
7. The method of Claim 6 wherein the platform discrimination indicates the value in the wireless network card is modified when transmissions are enabled.

8. The method of Claim 3 wherein the key value is obtained by providing the unique electronic I.D. value of the wireless network card to a program that calculates the key value.

9. The method of Claim 1 wherein the platform discrimination indication determines whether the wireless network card can be used with the given type of portable data device, one value of the platform discrimination indication allowing the wireless network card to be used with a restricted set of the portable data devices, another value of the platform discrimination indication allowing the use of the wireless network card with an expanded set of portable data devices, the expanded set of portable data devices including the restricted set of portable data devices, as well as additional portable data devices not included in the restricted set of portable data devices.

10. A method comprising:
at a first device, using an input electronic ID of a wireless network card to determine a first key value;
at a portable data device not the first device, using the first key value to calculate a calculated ID value; and
at the portable data device, comparing the calculated ID value to the electronic ID of the wireless network card so that if the calculated ID value matches the electronic ID of the wireless network card data transmissions from the portable data device through the wireless network card are enabled.

11. The method of Claim 10 wherein the first key is a platform activator key.

12. The method of Claim 10 wherein when the calculated I.D. value matches the electronic I.D. value of the wireless network card, the platform discrimination indication on the wireless network card is modified.

13. The method of Claim 12 wherein the platform discrimination indication is checked before transmitting from the wireless network card using one type of portable data device.

14. The method of Claim 13 wherein other types of portable data devices do not require a check of the platform discrimination indication before operation.

15. The method of Claim 10 in which fees are charged when the first device provides the first key value.

16. The method of Claim 10 wherein the production of the key value is done using an encryption algorithm.

17. The method of Claim 10 wherein the production of the calculated I.D. value is done using a decryption algorithm.

18. The method of Claim 10 wherein the portable data device includes a device driver.

19. The method of Claim 10 in which a cell service provider is used to provide the first key value.

20. The method of Claim 10 wherein the electronic I.D. value is stored on the wireless network card.

21. The method of Claim 20 in which a personal computer obtains the electronic I.D. from the wireless network card electronically.

22. A wireless network card for use with portable data devices, the wireless network card including a stored platform discrimination indication, the value of the platform discrimination indication determining whether the wireless network card can be used with a given type of portable data device, one value of the platform discrimination indication allowing the wireless network card to be used with a restricted set of portable data devices, another value of the platform discrimination indication allowing the use of the wireless network card with an expanded set of portable data devices, the expanded set of portable data devices including the restricted set of portable data devices as well as additional portable data devices not included in the restricted set of portable data devices.

23. The wireless network card of Claim 22 wherein the restricted set of portable data devices includes a personal digital assistant but does not include notebook computers.

24. The wireless network card of Claim 22 wherein the expanded set of portable data devices include notebook computers.

25. The system of Claim 22 in which the platform discrimination indication can be upgraded from the restricted set of portable data devices to the unrestricted set.

26. The system of Claim 25 wherein the user takes an electronic I.D. of the wireless network card, uses the electronic I.D. of the wireless network card to produce a first key value, this first key value is then used by the personal portable data device to calculate a calculated I.D., if the calculated I.D. matches the electronic I.D. of the wireless network card, the platform discrimination indication is modified to allow the wireless network card to operate with the expanded set of portable data devices.

27. A wireless network card software driver for a portable data device, the wireless network card software driver adapted to implement the steps of:

- checking wireless network card for platform discrimination indication;
- using platform discrimination indication to determine whether to enable data transfer using the wireless network card;
- if data transfer not enabled, prompting user for key value;
- using key value to determine a calculated ID value;
- comparing the calculated ID value with ID value obtained from wireless network card;

- if calculated ID value matches ID value obtained from wireless network card, modifying platform discrimination indication in wireless network card to enable data transfer using the wireless network card.